

4.13 RECREATION

4.13.1 Environmental Setting

The proposed Project area is located in southwest Sacramento County and north San Joaquin County. A portion of the proposed Project would lie within the Secondary Zone of the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, an extensive network of waterways. Specifically, the proposed pipeline route would cross both the Cosumnes and Mokelumne rivers and traverse through portions of two protected recreation areas, the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and the Cosumnes River Preserve. Most of the land surrounding the Project area is privately owned and used for agricultural purposes.

The vast network of waterways in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta (Delta) provides abundant recreation opportunities including, but not limited to, boating, fishing, and hunting. While most of the waterways in the Delta are public, the land adjacent to the waterways is predominantly private, limiting the number of public access points. Public use areas are generally concentrated where marinas and other facilities provide access to Delta waterways (Delta Protection Commission 2007). Within Sacramento County, four popular public access areas to the Delta are Hogback Island, Cliffhouse, Sherman Island, and Elkhorn Boat Launch (Sacramento County 2007). San Joaquin County provides public access to the Delta at Westgate Park and has identified Middle River as a Significant Resource Area for recreation (San Joaquin County 1992).

Many recreational activities in the Delta are associated with boating activities. Many visitors include local residents as well as residents of communities in the Secondary Zone and beyond. Boaters come from the greater Bay Area and from other parts of the State. Boating opportunities include day use boat and personal watercraft access, as well as houseboat rentals from local marinas (Delta Protection Commission 2007). Most of the recreation facilities are provided through private marinas which provide a range of facilities and services including: boat launching facilities; campgrounds; picnic grounds; restaurants; and bait and tackle shops (Delta Protection Commission 2007).

Approximately 1.2 miles of the proposed pipeline route would be situated on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administered land that is preserved for the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). The Refuge is located at the northern end of the proposed pipeline route in southern Sacramento County, in the outskirts of the community of Elk Grove. The Refuge consists of approximately 4,000 acres of protected lands within an approximately 18,000-acre area. Located in the northern Delta, the Refuge is part of an extensive network of seasonally flooded agricultural lands and naturally managed

wetlands that provide nesting, feeding, and resting habitat for the thousands of birds migrating along the Pacific Flyway (USFWS 2007). Recreational opportunities at the Refuge include hiking with a trail that is open on the second and forth Saturday of each month, wildlife viewing (including birdwatching), wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation as uses compatible with wildlife conservation on a limited basis (USFWS 2007).

Approximately 1.5 miles of the proposed pipeline route would be on Bureau of Land Management administered lands that are preserved for the Cosumnes River Preserve (Preserve). The Preserve is located at the southern end of the proposed pipeline route, about midway between the cities of Sacramento and Stockton. The Nature Conservancy and seven governmental and non-profit partners manage the Preserve, which is more than 40,000 acres or 62 square miles (The Nature Conservancy 2007). A mission of the Preserve is to demonstrate how agriculture, recreation, and education can co-exist with the natural environment (Cosumnes River Preserve 2007). The Preserve is a significant natural area for its commitment to the preservation of wildlife and important biological areas, and for its dedication to the enhancement of the quality of life for all those who visit it. Recreational opportunities at the Preserve include birdwatching, kayaking, hiking, and educational programs (Cosumnes River Preserve 2007).

Privately owned land within the Delta is primarily used for agricultural production. Conflicts arise between recreational and agricultural uses from litter, trespassing, unauthorized picking of fruit and vegetables, vandalism of agricultural equipment, and using unsuitable levee roads for access. Bank fishing is a popular activity within the Delta, although no restroom or garbage facilities are available (Delta Protection Commission 2007).

4.13.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal

There are no Federal regulations that pertain to recreational resources relevant to the proposed Project.

State

Delta Protection Act of 1992

As previously described, a portion of the proposed pipeline would be within the Secondary Zone of the Sacramento–San Joaquin River Delta. While no portion of the proposed pipeline would be located within the Primary Zone of the Delta, and therefore not subject to appeal to the Delta Protection Commission, the Delta Protection Commission recommends that impacts to the resources of the Primary zone from activities in the Secondary zone be mitigated under the California Environmental Quality Act (Delta Protection Commission 2007). The Delta Protection Act requires the Delta Protection Commission to prepare, adopt, review and maintain a comprehensive, long-range resource management plan in recognition of the Delta's beneficial use, including recreation.

Local

Sacramento County General Plan

The following open space goals and policies related to recreation from the Open Space Element of the Sacramento County General Plan (Sacramento County 1993) were considered in this analysis:

- **Goal:** Open space lands in Sacramento permanently protected through coordinated use of regulation, acquisition, density transfer and incentive programs.
- **Policy OS-1:** Permanently protect, as open space, areas of natural resource value, including wetlands preserves, riparian corridors, woodlands, and floodplains.
- **Policy OS-2:** Maintain open space and natural areas that are interconnected and of sufficient size to protect biodiversity, accommodate wildlife movement and sustain ecosystems.

San Joaquin County General Plan

The following recreation objectives and policies from the San Joaquin County General Plan (San Joaquin County 1992) were considered for this analysis:

- **Objective 2:** To protect the diverse resources upon which recreation is based, such as waterways, marsh lands, wildlife habitats, unique land and scenic features, and historical and cultural sites.
- **Objective 4:** To promote the recreational potential for San Joaquin County.

- **Policy 7:** Natural features shall be preserved in recreation areas, and opportunities to experience natural settings shall be provided.
- **Policy 8:** The County shall protect these resource areas identified in Figure IV-2 [of the General Plan] as being significant for recreation.
- **Policy 15:** The recreational values of the delta, the Mokelumne River, and the Stanislaus River shall be protected.

4.13.3 Significance Criteria

An adverse impact on recreation or special use areas is considered significant and would require mitigation if Project construction or operation would:

- Prevent or impede access to an established recreation area during its peak use periods or for more than 1 year;
- Adversely affect areas of special recreational concern (such as a wilderness area or wilderness study area);
- Provide or enable access to previously inaccessible, environmentally sensitive areas;
- Result in permanent alteration of a recreation resource (e.g., use of recreation lands or waters, disturbance to unique vegetation, habitat or outstanding landscape characteristics);
- Result in increased use of existing neighborhood and regional parks, resulting in physical deterioration; or
- Result in substantial adverse physical effects from construction of new or altered recreational facilities.

4.13.4 Impact Analysis and Mitigation

No Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) have been identified by PG&E relevant to this section.

Demand for Existing Parks

The recreation areas that could be affected by the proposed Project would be the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and the Cosumnes River Preserve. Other than the preserves, the Project site is generally within areas of privately owned agricultural land.

Increases in demand for recreational facilities are typically associated with substantial increases in population. Since the proposed Project is a response to projected growth in the region, the Project would not result in increased population growth or the increased use of neighborhood, regional, or other recreational facilities such that

substantial physical deterioration of existing facilities would occur or be accelerated. As further described in Section 4.12, Socioeconomics, the proposed Project would require up to 75 total crew members, including PG&E and contracted construction personnel. Of these construction crew members, PG&E estimates that about 30 percent (up to 23 crew members) would be hired from the local area. Given the brief construction period of approximately three to four months, family members would not be anticipated to accompany construction employees. Additionally, while the construction workers may use nearby recreation facilities during breaks, this would be temporary in nature and would not substantially increase the use of recreational facilities in the Project vicinity.

The proposed Project would not result in a substantial increased demand for recreational facilities or adversely affect Sacramento County or San Joaquin County park/population standards because the construction activities would be temporary. Therefore, impacts related to the increased use of existing neighborhood and regional parks, resulting in physical deterioration, would be less than significant (Class III).

New or Expanded Recreational Facilities

The proposed Project does not include any plans for the addition of any recreational facilities nor would it require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. Therefore, the proposed Project would not result in any adverse physical effects on the environment from construction or expansion of additional recreational facilities. This impact would be less than significant (Class III).

Access to Recreational Areas

The proposed Project would neither limit access to special use and recreational areas during either Project construction or operation, nor would it enable access to previously inaccessible or sensitive areas. Therefore, these impacts would be considered less than significant (Class III).

Construction Impacts on Recreational Experience

During construction, disturbances such as traffic, noise, and dust may affect the quality of some users' recreational experiences, but any effect would be temporary, lasting a maximum of three to four months. PG&E would use dust minimization techniques along the construction ROW for air quality concerns (see Section 4.6, Air Quality) and would remove all litter and debris daily from the construction worksite for biological concerns. Following construction, PG&E would return all disturbed areas to their approximate pre-

1 construction condition, as described in Project Description Section 2.6, Post
2 Construction Activities.

3 **Impact REC–1: Noise Effects on Wilderness Areas**

4 **Construction noise may elevate noise levels in Wilderness Areas (Potentially**
5 **Significant, Class II).**

6 Short-term construction noise from Project construction activities could be audible to
7 recreation enthusiasts in the nearby Cosumnes River Preserve and the Stone Lakes
8 National Wildlife Refuge areas. The construction noise could degrade the quality of
9 recreational experiences at the preserve and refuge areas resulting in a potentially
10 significant impact.

11 Mitigation for Impact REC-1:

12 **MM REC–1. Construction timing.** PG&E shall coordinate with the U.S. Fish and
13 Wildlife Service and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to identify low-
14 visitor use periods and shall schedule construction activities within those
15 time periods. PG&E shall also limit construction activities to weekdays in
16 the vicinity of the wilderness areas.

17 Rationale for Mitigation

18 Mitigation Measure REC–1 would reduce the potential impact to recreational
19 experiences within Cosumnes River Preserve and the Stone Lakes National Wildlife
20 Refuge areas to a less than significant level by avoiding construction during high visitor
21 use periods (Class II).

22 **Impact REC–2: Bridge Removal Effects on Recreational Boating**

23 **The removal of the Cosumnes River pipeline bridge may affect recreational**
24 **boating experiences (Potentially Significant, Class II).**

25 Construction activities associated with the removal of an approximately 630-foot long
26 suspension bridge that crosses the Cosumnes River could temporarily prevent non-
27 motorized canoes and kayaks¹ from traversing the river's channel in the bridge area.
28 This would result in a potentially significant impact (Class II).

¹ Motorized boats are not permitted within the Cosumnes River Preserve (Cosumnes River Preserve 2007).

Mitigation for Impact REC-2:

Implementation of Mitigation Measure REC-1 (see above) would reduce impacts by requiring the avoidance of construction during high visitor use periods. Implementation of Mitigation Measure REC-2 (below) would also be required.

MM REC-2. Posting of Signs Indicating Bridge Removal Construction Activities.

PG&E shall post signs at the Cosumnes River Preserve Visitor's Center, which is also the designated boat launching area, indicating alerts of pending bridge removal activities and potential access restrictions in the bridge area. The signage shall include at a minimum the following details:

- Expected dates and description of construction activities.
- Any pending access restrictions in the bridge area.
- Name and phone numbers of persons to contact at PG&E and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management for questions regarding bridge removal construction activities.

Rationale for Mitigation

Mitigation Measures REC-1 and REC-2 would reduce temporary impacts to recreational boating experiences on the Cosumnes River to a less than significant level by avoiding construction during high visitor use periods and by notifying paddlers with signage (Class II).

Impact and Mitigation Summary

Table 4.13-1 presents a summary of impacts on recreation that would be associated with the proposed Project and corresponding recommended mitigation measures.

Table 4.13-1. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures for Recreation

Impact	Mitigation Measure
REC-1: Noise Effects on Wilderness Areas	MM REC-1. Construction Timing
REC-2: Bridge Removal Effects on Recreational Boating	MM REC-1. Construction Timing
	MM REC-2. Posting of Signs Indicating Bridge Removal Construction Activities

4.13.5 Impacts of Alternatives

No Project Alternative

The No Project Alternative would not result in the construction and operation of a natural gas pipeline between the Elk Grove and Thornton Stations. The active segment of the existing Line 108 pipeline would continue to provide distribution services to local landowners. Potential recreation impacts associated with the construction of the Project would not occur. Existing operations of Line 108 would not result in recreation impacts.

Franklin 1 Alternative

The Franklin 1 Alternative would require an HDD pullback area on the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and cross two vernal pools that total approximately 2.51 acres. While no trenching would occur in the pullback area, this area would be subject to surface disturbances in an area under a conservation easement established to protect wildlife habitat. Construction activities could cause adverse physical impacts to the Refuge and may affect the quality of some users' recreational experiences. No HDD pullback area would be required on the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge under the proposed Project; therefore, the Franklin 1 Alternative would have a greater impact on recreation than the proposed Project (Class II).

Franklin 2 Alternative

The Franklin 2 Alternative, similar to the Franklin 1 alternative, would require an HDD pullback area on the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge and cross two vernal pools that total approximately 2.51 acres. While no trenching would occur in the pullback area, this area would be subject to surface disturbances in an area under a conservation easement established to protect this habitat. Construction activities could cause adverse physical impacts to the Refuge and may affect the quality of some users' recreational experiences. No HDD pullback area would be required on the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge under the proposed Project; therefore, the Franklin 2 Alternative would have a greater impact on recreation than the proposed Project (Class II).

Project without Bridge Replacement Alternative

The Project without Bridge Replacement Alternative would leave the historic suspension bridge in place, which would eliminate the potential for adverse effects on recreational

1 boaters on that section of the Cosumnes River. Impact REC-2 would therefore be
2 avoided. However, other recreation impacts under the Project without Bridge
3 Replacement Alternative would be potentially significant (Class II), the same as for the
4 proposed Project.

5 **4.13.6 Cumulative Projects Impact Analysis**

6 The construction of other projects in the vicinity of the proposed Project could
7 cumulatively affect recreational resources if the construction activities occurred
8 simultaneously. As discussed in Section 3.4, Cumulative Related Future Projects,
9 several projects are planned in the vicinity of the Project. The timing of construction for
10 the cumulative projects is unknown, and it is possible that portions of these projects
11 could be constructed at the same time and in the same vicinity as the proposed Project.
12 However, the proposed Project would not result in any long-term impacts on
13 recreational resources, and would therefore not be cumulatively considerable.
14 Cumulative impacts would be less than significant (Class III).

